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Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 EUR-25 AID-20 PC-04 OMB-01 DRC-01 IO-14 /159 W
---------- 094139
R 161430Z AUG 74
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0615
INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 9779

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT PGOV ET
SUBJECT: ERITREAN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT RESIGN

REF: ADDIS 8566 AND 7216

1. DURING AUGUST 16 SESSION OF LOWER HOUSE, ERITREAN DEPUTIES ANNOUNCED THEIR RESIGNATION EN BLOC.

2. PRESIDING OFFICER AND OTHER DEPUTIES ATTEMPTED TO GET THEIR ERITREAN COLLEAGUES TO REVIEW THEIR POSITION, SAYING THAT THEY WERE JEOPARDIZING THE UNITY OF THE EMPIRE.

3. ERITREAN SPOKESMAN THEN ROSE TO EXPLAIN GROUNDS FOR DEPUTIES' DECISION TO RESIGN THEIR SEATS. HE GAVE THREE PRINCIPAL REASONS:
(A) THE DEPUTIES HAD MADE EVERY EFFORT IN LAST SIX MONTHS MOVE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT TO COME TO GRIPS WITH ERITREAN PROBLEM, AND THEY HAD BEEN IGNORED OR MISUSED FOR THEIR PAINS.
(B) ETHIOPIAN ARMED FORCES CONTINUED THEIR REPRESSION OF PEOPLE OF ERITREA AND HAD TO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR MASSACRES, NOTABLY AT AGORDAT AND OM HAJJER, WHICH HAD RECENTLY
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OCCURRED. STATE OF EMERGENCY IN ERITREA, AND ASMARA CURFEW

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BEING ABUSED AND SHOULD BE LIFTED.
(C) OVER 1,000 ERITREAN POLITICAL PRISONERS CONTINUED TO LANGUISH IN ETHIOPIAN JAILS, NOTWITHSTANDING THE AMNESTY WHICH THE AUTHORITIES HAD RECENTLY ANNOUNCED.

4. ERITREAN DEPUTIES THEN LEFT THE HOUSE.

5. THE SPEAKER THEN PROPOSED THAT HOUSE SUMMON PRIMIN AND MOD ON AUGUST 20 TO EXPLAIN IEG'S ERITREAN POLICY. HE URGED (ABSENT) ERITREAN DEPUTIES TO HOLD THEIR DECISION TO RESIGN IN ABEYANCE UNTIL GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN HAD BEEN HEARD. HOUSE THEN ADJOURNED. IT RECONVENED AT 1300 HOURS TO DISCUSS MATTER FURTHER INCLOSED SESSION. WE ARE TOLD VARIOUSLY THAT ERITREANS STAYED AWAY AND THAT SOME OF THEM ATTENDED.

6. EMBASSY HAD BEEN CONTACTED AFTERNOON AUGUST 15 BY ERITREAN MP, WHO WISHED INFORM EMBOFF THAT FIRM DECISION MADE BY ERITREAN DEPUTIES TO RESIGN, MP HOPED EMBASSY WOULD HAVE OBSERVER IN GALLERIES AND INFORM USG PROMPTLY. MP NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT OF 23-MAN ERITREAN CONTINGENT, THREE CURRENTLY IN ASMARA, ONE HOSPITALIZED HERE AND ONE UPCOUNTRY AT FAMILY FUNERAL. IMPLICATION WAS ABSENTEES NOT NECESSARILY ON BOARD.

7. MP EXPLAINED THAT MASS RESIGNATION DECISION WAS REQUIRED AS PROTEST AGAINST IEG'S DOUBLE-DEALING ON ERITREAN PROBLEM AND TO PROTECT HONOR OF ERITREAN DEPUTIES. SPECIFICALLY, ERITREANS HAD CALLED ON THEN PRIMIN ENDALKACHEW MAKONNEN TO PRESENT THEIR CONSTITUENTS' GRIEVANCES (AS REPS OTHER PROVINCES HAD PRESENTED THEIRS) TO NEW CM. PRIMIN, IN PRESENCE THEN MININTERIOR ZEWDE BEGRE SELASSIE, HAD ACCEPTED PARLIAMENTARIANS' PROPOSAL FOR FACT-FINDING MISSION TO ERITREA, WHICH WOULD REPORT ACTUAL CONDITIONS/ ABUSES TO ADDIS AND HAD PROMISED ACTION WHICH NEVER MATERIAL-IZED. WHAT DID MATERIALIZE WAS ENDALKACHEW'S TELEVISED INTERVIEW ON ERITREA FOLLOWING WHICH, SOURCE SAID, PRESS FALSELY ASSERTED THAT ERITREAN MP'S HAD PRAISED PM AND HIS VIEWS. THIS PUBLICITY HAD HAD STRONGLY ADVERSE IMPACT IN ERITREAN MP'S CONSTITUENCIES, CASTING DEPUTIES IN ROLE OF SYCOPHANTS ALLOWING THEMSELVES BE USED BY ADDIS AUTHORITIES IN RETURN FOR MONEY (SALARIES). IN ANY EVENT, PLEAS FOR PUBLICATION OF CORRECTIONS FELL ON DEAF EARS. BITTERNESS IN ERITREA OVER ETHIOPIAN EXPLOITATION HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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REACHED UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF LATE, PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING OM HAJJER MASSACRE, AND ERITREAN DEPUTIES THUS COULD NOT REMAIN IN PARLIAMENT.

8. COMMENT: UNCLEAR AT PRESENT WHETHER RESIGNATIONS WILL HOLD. BE THAT AS IT MAY, EMBASSY OF VIEW THAT BESIDES REASONS CITED IN FOREGOING PARAGRAPHS, WIDELY EXPECTED APPROACHING DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT, EITHER BECAUSE OF ADOPTION NEW CONSTITUTION OR

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POSSIBLY AS RESULT MILITARY FIAT, NO DOUBT OFFERS ERITREAN
DEPUTIES ADDED INCENTIVE LEAVE OFFICE IN MANNER BEST CALCULATED
ENHANCE THEIR POSITION AT HOME.
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